1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

The Miskito readily intermarry with foreigners. They assimilate all races; the children always speak the language of the mother and grow up as Miskito, whether the father be "Creole," "Ladino," Carib, Negro, Sumu, Rama, Paya, North American, European, Syrian, or Chinaman. The villages between Wounta and Rio Hueso show this phenomenon to perfection. (Heath, a: 50.) Consequently the pure Indian tribes, as the Sumu, Paya, and Rama, are rapidly diminishing in numbers, whereas the Miskito, owing to the influx of fresh blood, are holding their own.

In spite of the fact that the Miskito have been since the seventeenth century in contact with buccaneers, British traders, and settlers, mahogany cutters, rubber bleeders, and Moravian missionaries, they have not changed considerably in their mode of life. Their tribal name appears first in the works of the piratical sea rovers, the English calling them generally "Moskite" and "Moskito," and the French "Moustique" and "Moustiquais."

Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 250; French ed.: II, 264–265) calculates the number of the Miskito at about 1,500 to 1,700, including 200 Negro slaves. In those days they were divided into two subtribes having but little relation with each other. One of them lived at Cabo Gracias a Dios, the other at Moustique (=Sandy Bay?). The Indians from this latter place occasionally accompanied the buccaneer vessels, the others being less courageous on the sea. Dampier states, however, that the whole tribes comprised less than 100 men (Dampier: I, 7). Raveneau de Lussan (437–438), who writes about the same time, says that the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios and lower Rio Coco were largely mixed with Negroes, while those at Sandy Bay were still pure Indians. In 1699 the Miskito occupied the seacoast from Cabo Camarón in Honduras to about 57 miles south of Brangmans River (=Wawa River?), where the territory of the Sumu began. The coast line of their territory had an extension of about 285 miles; they had, besides, two settlements on the lower Rio Coco (M. W.: 299). From the details given by the latter author the total population of this tribe numbered close to 1,000. In 1725 the Miskito numbered about 2,000 men altogether and were ruled by three chiefs (Lade). Bell (a: 250), who lived many years in the country, estimated the total Indian population of that territory at about 10,000 to 15,000, of which the Miskito numbered nearly one-half. The present writer calculates the total number of this tribe at about 15,000, of which at least one-third live on both banks of Rio Coco as far up as Rio Bocay, that is, 275 to 300 miles from the sea. In the Republic of Honduras, from Rio Coco to Rio Tinto, may be found from 3,000 to 4,000 Miskito, who inhabit the seashore and lagoons as well as the lower Rio Patuca. The remainder of this tribe lives in Nicaragua, from Rio Coco to Pearl Lagoon.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

CLOTHING

291 MEN.—The loin cloth, breechcloth, or waistcloth (M.: *palpura;*[17] T., P.: *wah;* U.: *ani*) was formerly the only article of dress worn by men on ordinary occasions. It consists of a long, narrow strip of bark cloth, 8 to 9 feet long and 12 to 15 inches wide, which is wrapped several times around the loins, while the ends are left to hang down in front and behind. Occasionally it was made from cotton, and ornamented with colored patterns. The loin cloth has now practically disappeared among the Miskito, being worn only by boys, but it is still in use among the grown-up Sumu. Now all the men from both tribes own loose cotton shirts (M.: *prak;* S.: *parak;* from the English "frock") and trousers (M.: *trâusis*, from the English; T., P.: *kal-anin;* U.: *kalson*, from the Spanish "calzón") with the tails generally not tucked in. They make these articles themselves from imported cloth or they obtain the finished garment by way of trade. Formerly the Sumu used a sort of shirt or poncho, consisting merely of a sheet of tree bark with a hole in the middle for the head; it was tied under each arm with a piece of fiber. This primitive garment was called *kahlâu* or *kahlo* by the Sumu; its Miskito name is unknown. When the Indian is in the open at the approach of rain he pulls his shirt off and covers it up with large *Heliconia* or *Musa* leaves in order to prevent it from getting wet.

WOMEN.—The only garment worn by the more primitive women of both tribes is a wrapper (M.: *kwaluntara;* T.: *ipnapan;* P.: *ipnapani, asna-pani, amat-pani;* U.: *asna-pahka*), a piece of cloth, 2½ to 3 yards in length, which is wrapped about the hips and extends from the waist, where it is fastened by tucking in one end, down to the knees. Nowadays it is made of imported bright-colored cloth, but formerly the common tunu bark cloth was used for this purpose. The upper part of the body was entirely naked in former days, but now the women wear a sleeveless garment of imported cotton goods, which is cut very open and is known by the English name *prak* (= "frock") among the Miskito; the Sumu call it *kahlâu* (T., P.) or *kahlo* (U.). Little girls wear a sort of loin cloth, as do the boys, but with broad end pieces which look like small aprons in front and behind; this garment is called *nika* by the Miskito and *tatai* by the Sumu.

292 DRESS OF THE CHIEFS.—Men of rank wore, besides the loin cloth, a sleeveless cotton tunic (M.: *wipal;*[18] S.: *kiñkura*) which hung down to the knees; it was beautifully embroidered with the down of the muscovy duck and dyed by means of vegetable juices. A girdle, sash or belt (M.: *yalasawa;* S.: *bamak-sitna*) of the same material was tied around the waist over this sort of mantle; it was about 6 feet long and 6 inches wide.

[17] This name is mentioned in 1699 under the form *purproy* (M. W.: 307, 308).
[18] Compare the word "huipil" in Mexican-Spanish.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

from time to time. There is no chimney in the Indian hut, the smoke (M.: *kyasma;* S.: *wayao*) being allowed to escape through the roof, which consequently presents a dark brown color. This arrangement has the advantage of driving away the mosquitoes.

MODERN HUTS.—In regions where the Indians have had much intercourse with foreigners they have improved their dwellings by the addition of side walls and by a floor of split bamboo or wood; the latter is elevated generally about 3 feet above the ground. The fireplace has then to be transferred to a small adjoining hut. In certain parts near the sea all the dwellings are erected on stilts, as the land is covered with water during the larger part of the rainy season.

In the interior the side walls (M.: *utla klar;* T.: *u dakna;* P., U.: *o itikna*) consist of a wattlework of split bamboo. The Miskito living near the seaside make use of the stem of the papta palm or the leafstalk of the siliko palm, set up vertically in the form of a stockade. This material seldom reaches as high as the roof; it is held in place by horizontally placed poles to which it is loosely tied. The coastal Miskito also employ a curious wickerwork of the split stem of the papta palm for house sides. Mud walls may occasionally be found and have been introduced by Ladinos or by the Black Carib.

Cattle and pigs are kept out of the interior by inserting several sticks crosswise in the doorway (M.: *utla-bila;* S.: *u-pas, o-pas*), or, in the case of an open shed, by building a rudimentary fence around the whole. In the more modern huts there is also a door and several windows, made of a framework of sticks, bamboo, and the like. The Indian dwelling of to-day is generally divided into two compartments of unequal size, the larger serving as living room and kitchen, while the smaller is used as dormitory.

COMMUNAL HOUSES.—Formerly long communal or multiple family houses (palenques) were used by these tribes. Now only the individual family type is met with, which may, however, also be occupied by one or two married children with their respective families. The old communal houses were divided into as many compartments as there were families. Girsewald (22) gives a short description of such a Sumu dwelling from the Waspuk River; it measured 80 feet in length and 40 feet in width and was inhabited by a dozen families. Smaller multiple family houses appear to have been used in former days by the Miskito likewise; M. W. (301) states that Sandy Bay, the most important of their villages in those days (1699), consisted of twelve straggling houses with about 400 inhabitants. Formerly, when the various Indian tribes were continually engaged in wars, this arrangement facilitated the defense of their villages.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

CHESTS.—Wooden chests or trunks, known by their English names, are used to store clothing and valuables. They may be of foreign manufacture or made locally from the Spanish cedar (*Cedrela* sp.). 352

ILLUMINATION.—Pine-wood torches are used for illuminating purposes. In certain regions where the pitch pine (*Pinus tenuifolia* Benth.) is absent or scarce the Indians make rude candles by surrounding a cotton thread with beeswax or with the gum of certain trees, as the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.) or the locust tree (*Hymenaea courbaril* L.). Small baskets, filled with big tropical fireflies, are also used occasionally as lanterns by children. 354

VARIOUS.—The products of the plantation are generally thrown on the floor or put on the tables or in the attic. Little shelves are suspended from the rafters in order to keep cooked food, meat, or fruits free from the numerous creeping and crawling insects which infest the dwellings. 356

Under the roof are seen the various tools, the fishing and hunting implements; they are stuck in the thatch or held in crude racks. From the rafters depend bags of pine-wood soot, bottles with red pigment, and hair oils or small *pispis* gourds (*Lagenaria vulgaris* Ser.) containing shot.

DOMESTIC UTENSILS

FIREMAKING.—Fire was produced formerly by the "twirling" method. A notch was made in a piece of wild cane and a hard-wood stick placed in the cavity. This stick was held perpendicularly and twirled rapidly round and round until fire was produced. Cotton was used as tinder. A very curious method practiced by the Sumu or Paya of Rio Patuca has been described by the Franciscan missionary Fernando de Espino.[21] 372

Steel and flint were introduced in early days for kindling fire, but have now been replaced practically everywhere by matches of foreign manufacture. [[71]]

FIRE FANS.—In order to accelerate the flame a dozen feathers from large birds, generally the guan (*Penelope cristata*) are tied together in the shape of a fan (M.: *kuru-taya;* S.: *uhlawa*).

TONGS.—Among the Miskito of Pearl Lagoon bamboo tongs or tweezers may occasionally be seen, to pull roasted plantains, cassava 412

[21] Ha criado Dios en lo mas retirado de la montaña un bejuco muy largo, sin, mudos, a manera de ramas de mimbre; cogen esta y cortanla en trozos pequeños de a palmo; pónenlas al humo, y en estando bien secas, cuando han menester fuego, cogen una, y con las dos palmas de las manos la estrujan como al molinillo para hacer chocolate, y cuando ellos ven que está de cierto temple, soplan una punta o extremidad y por la otra parte sale fuego, y se enciende como mecha de escopeta, porque al en si es estoposo por de dentro. De otro modo sacan fuego, que es el común de los indios, estregando un palo con otro (Serrano y Sanz: 367–368)

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

OTHER HANDICRAFTS

283 BARK FIBERS.—From various trees known locally as "mahoe" or "majagua" (M. and S.: *sani, wahpi, wahmatis, tâitu*) the Indians obtain strong bark fiber (M.: *sani;* S.: *wahso*). The best fiber from these trees is pulled off, split, cut into many threads of the desired size and made into ropes and cordage, hammocks (M.: *silmika;* S.: *wah*), matates or carrying bags (M.: *kûa;* T., P.: *wili;* U.: *wali*). These articles are colored with native bark dyes. The carrying bags are of various sizes and consist of coiled work without foundation; they are furnished with a head strap woven of one piece with the bag.

Bast fiber is also the common tying material of the Indians, and a supply thereof may always be found in the huts. It is also used as pack straps, which are put around the forehead and support the load carried on the back.

PITA FIBER.—Pita or silk-grass fiber (M.: *kara;* S.: *awa*) is employed for similar uses as bast fiber, and the articles made from it are practically indestructible. It is also made into fishlines, fish nets, and bowstrings, and used to repair shoes. Its extraction is very laborious. The pulpy covering surrounding the fibers is removed by scraping the surface of the leaf on a flat board with the aid of a machete or heavy iron knife. The fibers, which are thereby exposed, are then loosened and easily pulled from their bed by rubbing them crosswise of the leaf with the leaf pressed down upon the flat board. They are then washed to remove any adhesive pulp, dried, and rolled on the thigh into twine.

285 BASKETRY.—Basketry is not highly developed, although in such a well-watered country as the Mosquito Coast there is no lack of palms, vines, creepers, and epiphytic plants which may be used in basketwork. Certain vines are used in tying material, especially in the construction of the dwellings. The carrying bag of bark fiber or pita fiber takes to a large extent the place of baskets. From *wari* withes is made a round basket (M. and S.: *uslun, usnuh*), which is used to store calabashes and other small kitchen utensils. Other types made by the Sumu are called by these Indians *wah-tâina* and *sidan*. A large waterproof basket, known locally by the name *pataki*, is obtained in trade from the Black Carib; it is made from *siwa* withes.

281 LEATHER WORK.—The art of tanning has apparently been learned from the whites. The bark of numerous indigenous trees is used by the Indians for tanning purposes. Leather is used nowadays for drumheads, masquerade dresses, sandals, moccasins, crude saddles, and belts.

177

383 RUBBER INDUSTRY.—Some of the Indians have learned the process of hardening the milk of the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.) by treating

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

it with sulphur. They apply a thin coat of the milk on cloth for the making of waterproof traveling bags, hunter's bags, and ponchos or raincoats. This industry is, however, chiefly in the hands of the Ladinos.

WOOD CARVING.—Wooden stools (M.: *sulati;* T., P.: *sini;* U.: *panba*), carved with the machete and the adze from a solid block of wood, are in universal use. In olden times these stools had three well-centered, elaborately decorated legs and a beautiful bird or animal head, reminding much of the metates which are occasionally found in the ancient sites.

Formerly a sort of walking stick or scepter of hard wood, surmounted by a carved human head, was an insignium of office and authority, but this custom has been introduced apparently by the English or Spanish, as there is no native name for it. Similar sticks now belong to the outfit of the Miskito sukya.

The central house post of the old-fashioned Sumu hut was also elaborately carved. The art was also practiced on various wooden domestic implements, as for instance the large wooden spoons (M.: *kustara;* T., P.: *pan-yamna;* U.: *kusaro*) and the cradles (M.: *kuhsan;* T., P.: *pala;* U.: *lim*). Wood carvings generally represent animal or human heads, or geometric figures, rarely floral designs. At the festivals of the dead celebrated by the Miskito headdresses carved into animal or human heads are sometimes worn.

ENGRAVED CALABASHES.—The common calabashes (M.: *kahmi, kami;* S.: *sutak*) of the Miskito and Sumu are often engraved with simple geometric designs, such as triangles, circles, zigzag lines, parallelograms, which recall those used in tattooing, on pottery vessels and painted tunu cloth, or the ones found on the large river bowlders. According to the Indians, however, these are merely impromptu inventions and serve no other purpose but that of identifying their calabashes. An elaborately carved and painted calabash, obtained from a Sumu chief of Rio Bocay, has been described and depicted by Sapper (f, 206–210).

BEADWORK.—The women of both tribes are very clever in making pretty bead ornaments of various colors to be worn around neck, wrist, below the knee, and above the ankle; the men also occasionally use them as watch fobs and as hatbands. The designs are chiefly animal, especially of snakes. Two patterns of beadwork have been pictured by Sapper (a, 274), one representing paddle handles, the other the skin of the *rikaya* salamander. The Indians utilize small glass beads (M.: *lilywa;* T., P.: *ala;* U.: *tasaika*), which they obtain from the foreign traders. The colors preferred are green, blue, black, and white, while red, brown, and yellow are only sparingly used. Fellechner (137), however, states that the blue beads are not liked by the Miskito and that the red and yellow ones are preferred by

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

231 sp.), agouti (*Dasyprocta* sp.), deer (*Odocoileus* sp. and *Mazama* sp.), squash or coati (*Nasua narica*), and raccoon (*Procyon lotor*).

Wickham (b: 163; c: 200) even saw a tame otter among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido. The Indian women have great patience in taming young animals and they will suckle them as they would their own children. These animals are generally caught while still very young.

INDIGENOUS BIRDS.—The domestic turkey is now found in almost every hut. Among the other native birds which are usually tamed by the Indians are the following: curassow (*Crax* sp.), guan (*Penelope* sp.), mountain hen (*Tinamus* sp.), muscovy duck (*Cairina moschata*), macaw (*Ara* sp.), parrot (*Chrysotis* sp.), parrakeet (*Conurus* sp.), toucan (*Ramphastos* sp. and *Pteroglossus* sp.).

The birds are taken out of the nest while still young, but old birds are occasionally tamed. When slightly wounded or when shot with a blunt arrow they are carried home and kept for a few days without any food. After that they become generally very docile and are ready to eat the food given to them.

NATIVE BEES.—Various species of the native stingless bees are 231 occasionally found in a semidomesticated state around the Indian 263 huts. About a dozen species are found in the country, all belonging to the family of the Meliponidae. The largest of them is about the size of the European bee. The honey cells are circular and the honey is yellow and slightly acidulous in taste; it does not crystallize when kept for some time, as is the case with that of the European bee. It is slightly laxative and is generally diluted with water, either fresh or after having been allowed to ferment. Previous to the introduction of sugar-cane, honey was used to sweeten food. The wax, which is 237 light brown in color, is used as "cement" in the making of arrows, spears, and other implements; in certain regions it is also used for lighting purposes. The Indians also collect the honey from the bee 222 nests in the forests and store it in large bamboo joints.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN.—The most common domes- 231 tic animals are the dog, pig, cattle, and fowl, while the horse, cat, goat, ● 177 and sheep are rarely seen. All these animals are of foreign origin and have been introduced from the interior of Honduras and Nicaragua. Among the Indians they are known almost invariably by their Spanish or English name.[40] When the Indian family travels all the livestock is taken along.

CATTLE.—Cows (M.: *bip*, from the English "beef"; S.: *toro*, from 231 the Spanish *toro* "bull") are owned by many Indians, especially those living in the savannas. They feed on the coarse grass, there being no artificial pastures made by the Indians. The cows are rarely

[40] The Ulwa, however, call the cow and the horse by the native names they apply to deer (*sana*) and tapir (*pamka*), as do a number of other tribes in Central and South America.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

tions on the edge of the rivers, often at a considerable distance from their villages.

INFLUENCE OF CULTIVATION UPON THE FOREST.—The bush, which springs up again from the seeds of the forest trees germinating in the ground, is cut down from time to time. After two or three crops have been obtained from the plantation, a variety of weedy-looking shrubs and grass begins to get a hold upon the land. The plantation is then abandoned, as the Indian does not consider it worth while to undertake the great amount of labor needed to keep the ground clear. He prefers to prepare a new plantation (M.: *insla disañ;* S.: *yamak wisam*) by cutting down another patch of the virgin forest, where he is sure of a better crop.

The brushwood springing up in the abandoned plantation (M.: *insla prata;* S.: *yamak ba*), being not interfered with any longer, gradually chokes off the grass and weeds. As a number of the larger hardwood trees had been left standing in the first place, such an abandoned plantation will, after 15 or 20 years, not differ essentially from the surrounding primeval forest. It may then be cut again for the making of a new plantation. As the country is sparsely inhabited, the Indians will always find virgin forest within close distance from their home; besides, many of them are seminomadic and change their village sites from time to time. Were they to make their plantations for a long-continued period on the same spot, cutting down the brushwood again and again, a great change would gradually take place. The soil not containing any more seeds of forest trees, grass and a scrubby vegetation would in time spring up. This may be observed around certain villages, where by this manner the forest has been beaten back, inch by inch, gradually but surely.

BANANAS AND PLANTAINS.—It is noteworthy that the most important food plant of the Sumu and of the Miskito living toward the interior, the banana (M.: *siksa;* S.: *wakisa, pasa, iñkini*), is not indigenous to America. It was apparently brought by the Spaniards from the Canary Islands during the early part of the discovery, first to Santo Domingo (Haiti), and from there to the mainland. According to the testimony of the buccaneers of the latter part of the seventeenth century, bananas and plantains were already cultivated in those days by the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios. Raveneau de Lussan (429) saw in 1688 many bananas on the banks of Rio Coco, and states that they had been planted by the Albaotiins (= Sumu) and by the river currents. He also found this plant cultivated by the Mulattoes living around Cabo Gracias a Dios (438). Dampier (I, 9–10) mentions plantains among the Miskito, but he does not say anything about bananas. Exquemelin (English edit.: 114, 201), on the other hand, who visited the coast in 1671 and 1672, saw bananas, plantains, and

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

245 "racoven" [41] among this same tribe as well as among the Kukra of the Corn Islands. M. W. (302, 310) also refers to bananas and plantains among the plants cultivated by the Miskito.

There is a great variety of bananas and plantains grown by these Indians, but by far the most common is the so-called "Gros Michel" (also Jamaica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, or Bluefields), known to the Ladinos as "patriota" or "blanco"; this is the only variety entering largely into world trade. The Chinese or dwarf banana (*Musa chinensis* syn. *M. humilis* and *M. cavendishii*), which is the one grown in the Canary Islands for the European market, is also grown a little; this is the only species suitable for cultivation in the temperate zone and in the higher altitudes of the tropics. It is cultivated in Florida and in southern Louisiana, where it is called "horse banana." Various varieties of the plantain (M.: *plato*, from the Spanish "plátano"; S.: *waki; Musa paradisiaca normalis*) are also grown by both tribes. There are some native names for certain of the local varieties of the plantain and banana.

244 CASSAVA.—Sweet cassava (*Manihot palmata* Muell. or *M. aipi* Pohl; M.: *yauhra;* S.: *malai, maley*) is the staple food of the coastal Miskito; it is also cultivated by those living inland, and by the Sumu. This food plant was mentioned by Raveneau de Lussan (438), Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 251), and M. W. (310). The bitter cassava (*Manihot utilissima* Pohl) is unknown to either Miskito or Sumu, but is largely cultivated in two different varieties by the Black Carib (Garif) and the Paya of Honduras, who eliminate the deadly hydrocyanic acid contained therein by ingenious methods.

EDDOES OR TANIAS.—This plant, which is known locally among the English-speaking population by the Jamaican name "coco" (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium* Schott; M.: *dusua;* S.: *wilis*), is also cultivated for its eatable tubers. It is of similar appearance and habits as the taro (*Colocasia* sp.), the staple food of the Pacific Islands.

SWEETPOTATOES.—There are several varieties of the sweetpotato (*Ipomoea batatas* Poir.; M.: *tawa;* S.: *pai*). This food plant has been met with by several authors of the seventeenth century among the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 251; Dampier: I, 9; M. W.: 310). It was also cultivated by the aborigines of the Corn Islands in those days (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 114).

[[77]] YAMS.—Several varieties of yams (*Dioscorea* sp.) are cultivated; they are of African origin and the Indians have no native name for them.

[41] This name is probably deformed from pacoba, bacove, bakaceba, or bacoven, names given to the banana in Brazil and in the Guianas. These words derive from pako or *pakoba* "banana" of the Tupi-Guarani linguistic stock. In the Spanish edition of Exquemelin's work (p. 453) the word is, in fact, spelled "bacoves." Cf. also Van Panhuys, Observations on the Name Bacove, Twenty-first International Congress of Americanists. Göteborg, 1925.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

245 On the Atlantic slope of Central America this palm is grown as far north as Rio Tinto in Honduras, but on the Pacific side its northern limit is formed by Lake Nicaragua. It is found only in the cultivated state; the palms found occasionally in deserted regions indicate former village sites. A wild variety, bearing inedible small fruits, is found on the Mosquito Coast to the south of Bluefields; it is there known as "pejivalle de monte" or "wild supa."

COCONUT PALM.—The coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera* L.), called *kuks* by both tribes, is found in a semiwild state all along the seashore; some of the inland Indians have also planted a few trees. This palm is not mentioned by the buccaneers who visited the Mosquito Coast, as Exquemelin, Dampier, and Raveneau de Lussan; it was met, however, by M. W. (310). The Indians make little use of the coconut, except that they drink the water and eat the tender kernel of the young nut; very few of them extract the oil from it, as do the Creoles and Black Caribs.

249 SUGARCANE.—Sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum* L.; M.: *kayu*, from the Spanish "caña"; S.: *tisnak*) was brought by the Spaniards during the early part of the sixteenth century to the New World, first to the West Indies and later to the mainland.[a] The various buccaneer authors do not say anything of its occurrence among the Miskito. The first mention of this plant on the Mosquito Coast is found by M. W. (310), who states that the Miskito King Jeremy had some in his plantation, but in those days (1699) the Indians did not yet know how to make sugar from the juice. Nowadays they drink the juice of this plant, after having allowed it to ferment; they also boil it into sirup and brown sugar.

CACAO.—Although an indigenous tree, cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.; M. and S.: *kakau*) is cultivated only by the Ulwa, but in former days it was also grown by the Miskito (M. W.: 308, 310). The Indians also collect the pods from the various varieties of cacao trees which grow wild in shady parts of the forest.

Cacao pataste or "werbra cacao" (*Theobroma bicolor* Humb. and Bonpl.; M.: *urañ*; S.: *kuru*) is cultivated, however, in the neighborhood of the huts.

CACTUS.—Sloane (a: p. LXXVIII) reports that the Miskito cultivated the Opuntia cactus for the breeding of the cochineal insect; this must be a mistake, however, for that industry was limited to the Indian tribes of the Pacific slope and of the interior, particularly in Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, and Honduras.

245 FRUIT TREES.—The most common of the indigenous fruit trees, outside of the ones enumerated above, are the following: Pineapples

[a] Hernán Cortés, the great conquistador of Mexico, introduced the plant from Haiti into Honduras (Trujillo) as early as 1526.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

(*Ananas sativus;* M.: *pihto;* S.: *masa, masahti*),[46] papaws or papayas (*Carica papaya* L.; M.: *twas, tawas;* S.: *ulmak, ulumak*), avocados or alligator pears (*Persea gratissima* Gaertn.; M.: *sikya;* S.: *sikya, sarik*), soursops (*Anona muricata* L.; M.: *dwarsap;* S.: *sapot*), guavas (*Psidium guajava* L.; M.: *sikra;* S.: *burimak*), cashews (*Anacardium occidentale* L.; M. and S.: *kasau*), and watermelons (*Citrullus vulgaris* Schrad.; M. and S.: *rayapisa*). Spanish plums (*Spondias purpurea* L.), although apparently indigenous, are rarely found, and their Indian name *ploms* comes from the English language.

The most important fruit trees of foreign origin are: Citrus fruits (oranges, lemons, sweet limes, sour limes, shaddocks, grapefruits, citrons), mangoes (*Mangifera indica* L.), breadfruits (*Artocarpus communis* syn. *incisa*), tamarinds (*Tamarindus indica* L.), and rose apples (*Eugenia jambos* L.).

GARDENS.—Around their houses many Indians cultivate also a few fruit trees and other plants. The calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete* L.; M.: *kahmi;* S.: *sutak*) is very common in these gardens; it is esteemed for the very useful kitchen receptacles obtained from its fruit. A few bushes of cotton (*Gossypium peruvianum* Cav.; M.: *wahmuk;* S.: *wahmak*), chile peppers (*Capsicum* sp.; M.: *kuma;* S.: *anmak, aimak*) and annatto (*Bixa orellana* L.; M.: *aulala, tmarik;* S.: *awal*) are found near every lodge. A number of flowers are also cultivated, as the African marigolds, purple and white four-o'clocks, and the crimson hibiscus.

FISHING AND FISHING IMPLEMENTS

A very large share of the food supply of these primitive Indians is obtained from the sea, the lagoons, and the rivers. Fishing is therefore an occupation wherein both tribes have attained an unusual degree of skill. The main implements used for this purpose are harpoons, fishhooks, nets, and bows and arrows.

JAVELIN.—The javelin or throwing spear (M.: *wdisku;* S.: *suksuk*) is used in the sea, lagoons, and larger rivers. It consists of a wooden staff, from 8 to 9 feet in length, in the front end of which a sharp barbed steel head has been inserted. The staff is of strong, slender, light wood, generally of a tree called "magaleta" (M.: *sihnak, sinak;* S.: *sina*); the Ulwa, however, use for this purpose the wood of a tree called by them *pan-kuba*, which is said to be superior to the above-mentioned species. The loosely fitting steel point is from 4 to 5 inches long and is made of an old file, wherein several series of double

[46] The old authors, Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251), Dampier (I, 9), and M. W. (308, 310), met this fruit among the Miskito during the latter part of the seventeenth century; in those days it was also cultivated by the aborigines of the Corn Islands (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 114).

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

Fish may also be preserved by drying it in the sun, after having cleaned it and rubbed salt into the scraped flanks.

VEGETABLE FOOD.—Vegetables, such as cassava, sweet potatoes, tania, yams, green bananas, and plantains, are either boiled in water or (occasionally in coconut milk) with meat or fish, or they are roasted in the hot ashes. Cassava prepared by the last-named process is called *bulbul* by the Miskito.

The fruit of the pejivalle palm is also boiled in water, after which the skin is easily removed. Inferior varieties of this fruit are generally mashed and consumed in the shape of a beverage, either soured or fermented.

A sort of bread (M.: *tani;* S.: *dipis*) is also made. Dry maize is ground on the metate with the addition of a little water. It is then wrapped in large bijagua leaves after the manner of the "tamales" of the Ladinos. A few days later when this mass has turned sour it is baked in the embers. The Sumu also bake it occasionally, immediately after grinding the maize, without allowing it to turn sour; it is then known to them by the name *pañ* (from the Spanish "pan"). The Ulwa make this bread generally from unripe maize.

The pith or "cabbage" of various palms (*Attalea, Chamaedorea, Euterpe, Iriartea, Oreodoxa*) may be eaten either pickled or cooked; it is slightly bitter in taste. The pith and the small acid fruits of the pingwing or piñuela (*Bromelia pinguin* L.; M.: *ahsi;* S.: *ahsi, wakari*) are also esteemed. In times of scarcity the tender young bamboo shoots are also cooked and eaten.

The leaves of a small wild-growing plant, called cucumber or calaloo (*Phytolacca decandra* L.), are occasionally eaten as "spinach" by the Indians, who have taken this habit from the Creoles and Negroes. The common name "calaloo" for this plant savors of African origin; the Miskito call it *tilba pata* "tapir food." Indians and Ladinos use the leaves sometimes as soap, hence the local Spanish name "jaboncillo."

WILD FRUITS.—The Indians also collect the fruits of a number of wild-growing trees, of which the following are the most important for food: Hog plums (*Spondias lutea* L.; M.: *pahara;* S.: *walak*), nances or nancitos (*Byrsonima crassifolia* H. B. K.; M. and S.: *krabo, karabo*), zapotes or mammee apples (*Lucuma mammosa* Gaertn.; M.: *kuri;* S.: *sipul*), sapodillas or naseberries (*Sapota zapotilla* Coville; M.: *iban;* S.: *iban, sabakan*), guapinol or locust tree (*Hymenaea courbaril* L.; M.: *lâua, laka;* S.: *tipi*), several species of dwarf guavas (*Psidium* sp.; M.: *kru;* S.: *kuru, arayañ*), breadnut tree (*Helicostylis ojoche* K. Sch.; M. and S.: *pisba, tisba*), monkey apple (*Moquilea platypus* Hemsl.; M.: *puramâira;* S.: *lasat*), beach or sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera* L.; M. and S.: *waham*), icaco or coco plum (*Chrysobalanus icaco* L.; M. and S.: *tawa*) and several species of granadillas or fruits of passion

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

263 or 1668 among the Indians (Sumu or Paya) living around Rio Guampú in Honduras.[48]

VANILLA.—Sloane (a: p. LXXVIII) gives an account of the method practiced by the Miskito in curing vanilla (*Vanilla planifolia;* M. and S.: *diti bâinia*). The present-day writer has not observed that the Indians make any use of the pods, except in flavoring a drink prepared from cacao and maize.

249 ANNATTO.—Annatto (M.: *ûlala, tmariñ;* S.: *awal*) is cultivated
263 chiefly for the face pigments furnished by the red coloring matter
177 surrounding the seeds; it is not used as a condiment, except in isolated cases, where this habit has been introduced by the Ladinos.

COOKING OILS.—The kernels contained in the seeds of various palms
252 are made into oil, which is occasionally used in the kitchen. The most important one is that extracted from coconuts. The nut is grated and then boiled, the oil being skimmed off as it rises to the top. The seeds of the corozo (*Attalea* sp.), hone or oil palm (*Elaeis melanococca* Gaertn.), huiscoyol (*Bactris horrida* Oerst.), and the kahka palm are also opened occasionally to extract oil from the kernel. Cooking oil is also furnished by the red fruits of a forest tree (M.: *yari;* S.: *yara*), and by a small shrub called *wari-klua* by the Miskito.

263 SWEETENING FOOD AND DRINK.—Previous to the introduction of sugar-cane the Indians had to rely upon ripe bananas or plantains and wild honey to sweeten certain food beverages. Now sugar-cane juice is boiled into sirup or brown sugar. As soon as the juice has been squeezed out it is poured into a large pot on the fire; as the heating progresses a scum arises which is skimmed off with the aid of a calabash shell pierced with holes and attached to a long stick. When sufficiently thick the brown liquid is poured into bottles and kept until needed. For the making of sugar the juice has to be boiled somewhat longer; finally it is poured into wooden molds where it crystallizes.

VARIOUS.—The round berries of the allspice tree (*Pimenta officinalis*), which grows wild in the forest, are gathered, dried in the sun, and used to flavor certain beverages.

Black pepper and cinnamon have also been introduced into the native kitchen; both of these commodities are bought in the local shops.

276 The chewing of coca, which was a current habit among the Nicarao of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua at the time of the conquest, appears to have been unknown on the Mosquito Coast.

---

[48] "Hacen sal de unos árboles que hay en aquellas montañas, a manera de coyol o coco; rajan este árbol, hazendo astillas, quemanlo, hacen ceniza, hacen de ella legía; esta en una olla grande la echan, sola la legía sin la ceniza, y a fuego manso la van calentando hasta que se convierta en sal; es muy blanca, pero no tan fuerte como la que usamos." (Serrano y Sanz: 368.)

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

624 chiefs, called by the Miskito name *wita* or *wihta* (lit.: "head"), resided in the larger villages.

648 Now the government of the two republics, Honduras and Nicaragua, is represented by *comandantes*, who are invariably Ladinos. Indian *subcomandantes* are occasionally named in the larger areas, but their authority is practically insignificant. Some deference is also paid by the Indians to the elders of the settlements, and especially to the sukya. The officials despatched from Tegucigalpa or Managua are rarely of the better element, and have at times committed great abuses among the timid and peaceful aborigines. They are too frequently men of low morals who try to enrich themselves by imposing fines upon the Indians, which are put into their own pocket, or by compelling the natives to work for their personal benefit.

LAWS: CRIME AND ITS PUNISHMENT

627 ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.—In former days the punishment of criminals was intrusted to the individual wronged rather than to special officers of justice. If the injured person did not take any steps to revenge himself he was considered a coward.

●177 692 681 Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, when British influence spread to the "court" of the principal Miskito chief, special officers, known by the name *kwatmas* (from the English "quartermaster") were intrusted with the execution of government orders and the administration of justice. Punishment was inflicted in the shape of fines, flogging, and death by hanging; prisons were unknown. On their periodical visits these officers used to whip all the young people whom they could seize, in order to cure them of their laziness and stinginess, apparently whether they were guilty of the charge or not. This was called "teaching the people" (M.: *upla smalkaya;* S.: *mōih sumalnin, mōih sumalnaka*) and had the object of inculcating principles of good conduct and morality. An account of such proceedings is given by Bell (b: 278–282).

685 THEFT.—A thief was compelled according to Indian law to restore twice the value of the stolen object.

847 INFANTICIDE.—This was apparently not considered a crime in former days under certain circumstances. (See Children: Their Birth and Education.)

683 BODILY INJURY.—For any bodily injury, whether done intentionally or not, a payment of "blood money" (M.: *tala mana;* T., P.: *a minit;* U.: *awas makalnak*) was collected.

682 MURDER.—A murderer had to follow his victim into death. If he should not do so voluntarily, the relations of the murdered man might kill him without risk of punishment; besides, in that case, his memory would be dishonored. The *lex talionis* was applied rigidly.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

hours. During this time the quarrelers follow their usual occupation; from time to time they appear at the doorway in order to make themselves better heard. One tries to overtalk her adversary, picking out the weak points in the personal appearance, habits, and morals of the other. They, however, seldom come to blows. During this time the men remain passive onlookers, as they are not supposed to interfere in such quarrels. They will, nevertheless, attempt to persuade their wife to desist from the vulgar language and prepare the next meal.

Contact with foreigners is rapidly modifying the character of the Indians; it has made them less shy and easier to approach, and more hospitable, but on the other hand has made them more pretentious and less reliable and trustworthy. It has introduced begging among them, a practice which was formerly unknown. The more primitive Sumu even to this day will never ask a stranger for a present, and if the latter should offer them a leaf of tobacco or the like they will promptly give him some article of food in exchange. The Sumu, if unwilling to answer a question, will simply say *talnas-yañ*, "I do not know," or they will give an evasive answer, but the Miskito will frequently turn to a deliberate lie. The childish preference for anything foreign is also the result of contact with the white man.

The hybrid Miskito differ greatly in character from the pure Indians, owing to their large admixture with Negro blood and their long association with foreign traders and settlers. They are rather noisy, bold, daring, adventurous, self-assertive, arrogant, and up to the present day they are prone to domineer over their more gentle and peaceable neighbors. In former days some of the Sumu, Paya, and Rama were subject to the "King" of the Miskito, to whom they had to pay a sort of tribute in the form of dugout canoes, cattle, and other articles. The ascendancy of the Miskito over the other tribes of the Mosquito Coast began about the latter part of the seventeenth century, after the former had become acquainted with the use of firearms through the agency of the buccaneers. The Miskito even undertook in the following years marauding expeditions to the coast of Costa Rica and Panama, in order to enslave the Indians and plunder the cacao plantations of the Spaniards.

PERSONAL NAMES

The members of the same family address each other generally according to age and sex as father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, elder brother, younger sister, etc. The infant does not receive any individual name until some peculiarity of appearance, manner, habit, or character has been observed.

86787—32——8

1: Conzemius M-4, [illegible] 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

551 177 These old Indian names have now practically been superseded by Spanish or English names. On the coast English names seem to be preferred, but in the interior nearly all the names are taken from the Spanish language. The Indian generally takes only one name, which may be either a Christian name or a surname; from time to time they change it. A well-known Miskito of Rio Patuca, the owner of many cattle, even took the name "Honduras."

Foreigners traveling on the Mosquito Coast are frequently asked by the Indians to name their youngest child. It is often difficult to find a name which is acceptable to them, as they do not want any which is already found in the region. M. W. (304) tells us that at the end of the seventeenth century the most prominent Miskito all had names given to them by the buccaneers; every one of the adventurers stopping at the coast was asked to give a name to one of the Indians, and the latter thought that the same buccaneer could not well give a name to more than one Indian.

551 The mentioning of a deceased person's name is taboo among all the tribes under consideration, and it is a direct insult to mention it in the presence of his relatives.

551 177 But at no time does the Indian like to be addressed directly by his name. It is therefore often difficult to find out their real name, especially of the women, who are generally known as So-and-so's wife, daughter, mother, sister, etc. In former days this was the case with the men, too, but owing to their working in the mahogany camps, gold mines, and other enterprises, where they had to give their name in order to be distinguished from the other laborers, this aversion has gradually disappeared. While in charge of a mahogany camp on Rio Coco I had great difficulty at first in obtaining the names of new laborers, especially of the Sumu. They would invariably tell me that they were the son of So-and-so, or they gave me the name of the village they hailed from. However, if there were other Indians present one of the latter would promptly answer my question by telling me the name of the particular Indian I had addressed.

601 The series of relationship words, by which the members of a family address each other instead of proper names, is very complicated among the Miskito, and may be replaced by a whole new series when a death occurs in the family. Husband and wife call each other *mayi* "my consort." Before any child has been born to them the husband often calls his wife *kika* "girl," while she calls him *wahma* "young man." After the birth of the first child they often call each other *luhpi yapti* "my child's mother," and *luhpi aisa* "my child's father," respectively. After the death of a child they apply to one another the name *sukrika*. The words *mahma* or *masa* are frequently used to address a son or brother, while *kika* or *misis* are the forms of address for daughter or sister.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

hands of an Indian from the neighboring village of Cuje, who called it "quijongo" or "sambumbio." It was at least 5 feet in length and 1½ inches thick. A little from the center the string was tied back to the arc with the aid of another thread, so that two strings of unequal size were formed. This instrument could produce a great variety of tones. In Olancho (Honduras) I saw later a bow of equal size but with a calabash resonator; it was called "caramba" there. The gourd was fastened with the mouth downward at the convex surface of the arc, at the same point where the cross string had been attached to the wood, that is, about one-third the distance from one end. The Rama of Nicaragua also call this instrument *lufiko*, while among the Lenca of Honduras it is known as *bumbum;* it is also found among the Kekchi of Guatemala, and was known to the Island Carib of the seventeenth century, according to De Poincy.

In spite of the fact that in Central America the musical bow is limited to the pure Indians, it is supposed to be, like all other stringed instruments, of foreign origin. The various names by which it is known in Central America savor of African origin. It is also found in certain regions of South America and has a wide distribution under different forms in large areas of Africa and Melanesia.

OTHER INSTRUMENTS.—Violins, guitars, accordions, and harmonicons may be found in certain regions; they are chiefly of German manufacture. Instead of beating the drum or shaking the rattle, the Miskito occasionally clap the hands together at the dances in order to obtain a rhythmic effect.

AMUSEMENTS: SONGS, DANCES, STORY-TELLING, GAMES, AND SPORTS

SONGS.—The Sumu rarely sing (M.: *diwanaya;* T., P.: *diwannin, diwannini;* U.: *unbdinaka*), but the Miskito sing occasionally when they are either sad or happy. All their songs are soft and plaintive, and they all sound alike to the stranger, who is unable to distinguish the gay songs from the sad ones, unless he has lived some time among the Indians. The sukyas of both tribes sing upon practicing their rites of incantation, but owing to their intermingling of many old and obscure phrases, these songs are unintelligible to the other Indians.

I was unable to collect any indigenous song, but Young, Fellechner, and Bell have been more fortunate than I. In these songs appear many phrases not used in general conversation. Fellechner (268) obtained a number of songs which were apparently composed in an antique form of the Miskito language, for the interpreters were unable to give the meaning of many parts of them. Most of this material has never been published. The following specimen is that

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

539

In the night I thought of my dead boys;
They called me "Mother!"
I thought I was alone, and had no children.
I remembered my daughters,
But they were far away among the white people.
My children have come back.
My heart is like the young plantain-leaf,
That shoots out when the sun shines.

DANCES.—Dancing (M.: *dans pulaya*,[42] T.: *dans pulnin;* P.: *abanini, danis pulnini;* U.: *abanaka*) is practically limited to the various festivals and had perhaps originally a religious significance. Certain rejoicings of the Miskito, at which dancing takes place, are called *li-siksa* (lit.: "black water"), and others are known by the name *plamana;* the latter are celebrated in honor of some one who is leaving for a long journey. 535

The women perform individual dances which do not lack a certain grace; they place the hands upon the shoulders or the head and make various contortions of the body as they walk or jump around.

Some dances of rejoicing have been introduced by the Negroes or Creoles, and are performed chiefly around Christmas, which is considered a period of merrymaking by all these Indians, whether evangelized or not. The festivities last about two weeks. A great circle is formed with men and women alternating and joining hands or placing the right hand upon the left shoulder of their neighbor; in the center are seated one or two men beating drums, and at the rhythm the circle moves around. 535 177

STORY-TELLING.—The telling of stories is one of the favorite ways of passing the long hours at night before going to bed. The old Miskito, who lived under the good old days of the "Mosquito Kingdom," are always glad to talk of their armed expeditions into the "Spaniard's" country (Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica), and to relate some bizarre exploits in connection with those wars. The Indians can relate an occurrence in the most animated manner, but they do not seem to invent tales or stories as do the Negroes. 538

When the Indian has returned from a hunting or fishing expedition he delights in giving a most detailed account of everything he noticed in the course of the day, even if nothing out of the ordinary occurred. He will give all the particulars regarding the game he saw, and relate in a most tedious manner how he succeeded in outwitting it and getting within gunshot of it. The narrator may keep on in this manner for hours, while his patient listeners occasionally interpolate an exclamation denoting their astonishment, surprise, doubt, agreement, or comprehension.

---

[42] The word *dans* or *danis* is taken from the English.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

Wickham (b: 160–161; c: 205) states that the Ulwa used to cure pains in the limbs by flogging the aching part with a kind of nettle, until the skin became raised in bumps.

A disease of the eyes, perhaps trachoma, called *ūkri bāikan* by the Miskito, is prevalent; it does not produce total blindness, but causes great pain. Foreigners appear to be immune to it.

Venereal diseases, as syphilis (M.: *mātrmanka;* S.: *pildū*) and gonorrhea (M., S.: *iskadora*), are only met with in the larger villages at the coast. Anthropologists and the medical world seem, however, to agree now that syphilis is of American origin.

Yellow fever likewise is undoubtedly of New World origin, and was formerly endemic in certain parts of the Central American lowlands. In the sparsely populated country under consideration, however, no authentic case of yellow fever has been recorded. Perhaps the transmitting agent, a species of mosquito (*Stegomyia fasciata* syn. *Aëdes* sp.), is absent. Black water fever is also unknown. Leucorrhea is, however, very common. Indians suffer seldom from hemorrhoids (M.: *slabla dāiwaya;* S.: *sarani putulnin, saraka putulnaka*), which swelling is prevalent among whites residing in the country.

FOREIGN DISEASES.—Europeans have introduced among the Indians a number of distressing maladies formerly unknown to them, and against which they had not the slightest immunity. Although strong and robust, the Indians are especially subject to infections by the germs of diseases generated by large communities.

Epidemics of our common catarrh (M.: *syahka;* T., P.: *ohdana;* U.: *nañtak iwanaka*) have occasionally caused great havoc among the Indians of the interior.

Whooping cough (M.: *ikya;* S.: *duk*) appears occasionally as an epidemic among children, whereby many of them die.

Influenza or grippe also occurs periodically as an epidemic. It seems to have been brought to the country for the first time in 1807–08 by some Miskito returning from the logwood and mahogany camps of British Honduras. Consumption is also found sometimes, especially among the Sumu.

Measles and smallpox were brought to the New World by the first conquistadores and facilitated the subjugation of the Indians. Epidemics of measles (known by the Spanish name *"sarampion"*) are responsible for many deaths; this disease was already observed at Cabo Gracias a Dios among the Miskito during the latter half of the seventeenth century (Exquemelin, French ed.: II, 277). Smallpox has on different occasions decimated entire villages, but since the middle of the nineteenth century has not appeared on the Mosquito Coast. Wickham (b: 204–208) gives an account of the last epidemic of Asiatic cholera which swept the country in 1867 and 1868.

66787—33——9

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

could scarcely move, and he asked his brother for some water. The latter did as he was told, but the more Suko drank the thirstier he became, and he kept his brother continually on the run to fetch water. Finally Kuru became tired of this and helped his brother to get to the edge of the creek, so that he might drink as much as he wanted.

Arrived at the waterside, Suko lay down on the ground, and reaching with his head down in the water, he kept on drinking without stopping. Gradually his body assumed the shape of a gigantic boa constrictor (M.: *waula;* S. *wayil*), while the head retained its normal size and shape. Kuru became scared and he went home, but did not dare tell anything about what had happened. When the people inquired about his brother, he answered that he was still engaged in fishing and would come a little later.

But the neighbors noticed that something had happened and they made off all together to look for Suko. Arrived at the fishing ground, they found the boa constrictor on the branches of a very high ceiba or silk-cotton tree. But hardly had they perceived him when a big flood came which inundated the whole country. Every one was drowned with the exception of Suko and the latter's wife and children.

CHRISTIANIZATION.—Many women and children who have not been christened carry small crosses, medallions, and scapularies around their neck, which articles they have obtained from passing priests, or bought from Ladino traders. They consider them generally as charms to ward off danger, sickness, poison, and death. By many Indians who have not received any teachings from missionaries baptism is considered often only a sort of magic ceremony to get a new name, drive out the devil, or ward off danger, evil, and the like. Even in the interior, where many Indians pretend to be Catholics, the cult of the saints is often nothing less than a fetish worship. Pictures and statues of the saints take the place of house idols. When the Indians are on the point of committing an act which does not agree with the teachings of the church, the respective images or statuettes are covered up with a cloth, so that the saints are unable to observe them. When they ask the saint for a special favor they make a vow or solemn promise to him and pray during nine consecutive evenings. In case the saint proves unreliable he is sometimes punished by being beaten or beheaded or mutilated in some other way.

During the colonial period Spanish missionaries made several attempts to penetrate among the aborigines of the Mosquito Coast, but their efforts were unsuccessful. An account of the activities of these Franciscan monks is given by Conzemius (b: 25–31). Since the last years of the nineteenth century Spanish Capuchins from Barcelona have been established at Bluefields and in several of the

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

764 532 picted eight of the above-named masks; most of them have their backs concaved in a cylindrical form, by which we might imagine that they were parts of sepulchral urns. (See also Roberts, pp. 299–300.)

775 CATCHING THE SOUL OF A DECEASED PERSON.—Upon the death of a person the soul (M.: *isiñni*) or "shadow," as the Creoles say, leaves the body and remains about the house. After the burial it is "caught" by the sukya and taken to the grave; otherwise it will roam about and do all sorts of mischief. This custom has been introduced among the Miskito by the West Indian Negroes; recently it has spread to the Twahka and Panamaka.

This action takes place at night by a very dim light. The task of the sukya appears to be by no means easy. Sometimes he fails to catch the soul on the first night and has to do everything over again on the following day. He throws himself into a state of ecstasy and then dances around the bed of the deceased, over which a white cotton sheet has been spread. Then he sits down in a hammock which has been slung near by and he communicates the messages received from the dead during his supernatural state. The latter might give him the names of the persons who owe him some money or have failed to return a borrowed object. If he owns some young trees, the fruits of which he has not yet tasted, he will order them cut down without any further delay. Toward daybreak, when all the people present are more or less drunk, for intoxicating beverages are served to all the guests, the sukya seizes some insect, generally a firefly or a beetle, which he pretends to be the soul of the deceased. He wraps it up quickly in the bed sheet or incloses it in a bottle and then takes it to the grave.

Some of these sorcerers are said to be able to catch the soul of Indians who have died far away from home. This is, however, a more difficult task, as the soul may keep him waiting for a whole week, until it condescends to be taken to its final resting place. Formerly the soul was supposed to enter animals or other objects belonging to the deceased, and these had to be killed or broken to drive the intruder out.

THE HEREAFTER

Both tribes believe in the immortality of the soul and its translation to a realm of happiness and bliss. Remains of this belief are seen in the burial customs, for certain objects are given to the dead which are indispensable to him during his long journey to that final resting place. Some Indians make the future existence dependent on present conduct, but this idea has undoubtedly been borrowed from Christianity.

[177]

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948

SA15 Mosquito SA15

Garif SA12

THE CARIBBEAN LOWLAND TRIBES: THE MOSQUITO, SUMO, PAYA, AND JICAQUE

By PAUL KIRCHHOFF

INTRODUCTION

M
101 The modern *Paya* and *Jicaque* enclaves in the Caribbean Lowlands may
171 not all be the descendants of the people so named by the first explorers
177 (maps 2 and 5). It is possible that the culture of the people first discovered on the coast was similar to that from which the present-day *Mosquito* and *Sumo* culture has evolved; although the north coast probably had culture traits that differed significantly from those of the *Mosquito* and *Sumo*. It is impossible to describe the post-Conquest changes of the culture of the *Paya* and *Jicaque*. It seems reasonably certain, however, that during the past 400 years the east coast people and the people now known as the *Paya* and *Jicaque* have converged culturally. We can, then, describe these peoples as a unit, although hypothetically their cultures have developed out of the ruins of a more complex aboriginal
G background.

177 Less important but significant features of the culture may be ascribed
175 to the contact with the *Black Carib* Indians, who were brought to the Bay Islands in 1796 and whose descendants have settled on the mainland. The importance of the early Negro influence has already been noted.

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

M
241 **Farming.**—A type of slash-and-burn agriculture is employed by all tribes. Every season the men clear new farmlands and burn the slash. Planting and cultivating is done with a digging stick. This is woman's work, except among the *Jicaque* (Von Hagen, 1943), and the women also harvest the crops. Some fields have combinations of crops, such as maize, beans, and peanuts; others are reserved for single crops, especially the tubers.

G A list of agricultural products may be found below. Sweet manioc,
[241 an important *Mosquito* crop, is grown by all tribes. Bitter manioc, prob-
177] ably introduced by the *Carib*, is important to some *Paya* and *Jicaque*.

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
SA15 Mosquito SA15

342 time rectangular houses with a hip roof used by single families are built. The steep roof, thatched with palm leaves, was supported on posts. All houses have walls about 4 feet (1.3 m.) high. Lofts for storing food and for sleeping are made by laying split bamboo sticks across the beams.

352 Household furniture consists of mattresses of bark or deerskin, platform beds (*Paya* and *Northern Sumo*), sitting hammocks, wooden chests, three- or four-legged stools, and a notched-post ladder. Fires are built [354] of three logs on slightly raised mud platforms inside the houses. Stored 415 near these are cooking pots, bamboo tongs used to remove food from the fire, gourd containers and colanders, wooden spoons, ladles, and sections of bamboo used to haul water and to store beverages.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

291 Bark cloth was formerly the most common fabric, but it is now being replaced by cotton cloth, usually obtained by trade. Native cotton cloth was used largely for ceremonial and festive occasions. The *Mosquito* made blankets and clothing of palm fiber.

The male costume consists of a breechclout and poncho. The latter is tied under the arms and secured around the waist with a belt. Everyone went barefoot, but occasionally *Paya* men wore tapir-hide sandals and *Mosquito* men moccasinlike footgear. Women wore a knee-length, wrap-around, bark-cloth skirt, but the upper part of their bodies was nude. Children went nude until they were 8 or 10 years old, when they adopted a breechclout (*Sumo, Mosquito, Paya*). *Sumo* chiefs used a long tunic and a sash, apparently made of cotton. It was dyed and embroidered with crane feathers. These costumes, or modifications of them, are still [177] worn by the more conservative tribes, but commercial cloth is becoming more common and European styles are being adopted.

302 Men cut their hair short, but occasionally elder men left a lock at the back of the crown (*Mosquito*). In about 1850 the *Sumo* tied their hair into a queue, which was oiled or greased; at present they cut it short with bangs over the forehead. A crude comb was made of sticks tied together. Women cut the front hair in bangs allowing the rest to hang freely. The men attached feathers to their hair but women decorated [301] theirs with flowers and colored bands. At time of mourning the hair is cut off short. Both sexes devote considerable attention to their hair.

301 Nose pins and lip and ear ornaments of gold or turtle shell were worn. The *Mosquito* hung shell or brass plates from the lower lip. Conical or bell-shaped lip or chin ornaments were worn by the *Kukra*. Wooden plugs worn in the ear lobes were common. On festive occasions the *Mosquito* and *Sumo* wore either a cotton headband decorated with feathers or a cap made of bamboo decorated with feathers and with long, painted, bark-cloth streamers. The *Mosquito* hung metal or shell plaques and ornaments made of bone and feathers about their necks. *Sumo* women

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15

In recent times important contributions with regard to the Miskito 114
Indians have been made by H. J. Spinden,[25] A. H. Schultz,[26] D. E. Harrower[27] and the exhaustive investigations of E. Conzemius.[28]

THE TROPICAL SITUATION

The status of peoples living in the tropics and semi-tropical regions 262
varies considerably, depending on environment and man's adaptation to his habitat.[29]. Different foods are produced under different conditions. Thus, in the inner jungles and in certain highlands, very little food may be available; along the rivers it may be plentiful, and along the seashore other food sources may manifest themselves. Climate, geography, and socio-economic factors have a direct bearing on food availability and consumption.[30] Food habits naturally follow a similar 262
pattern: the classical tortilla of Mexico and the Middle American countries; the use of manioc in the Amazon area; the dehydrated potato (chuño) of the Andean altiplano, the all too starchy diet which has developed in the Caribbean areas, all have their explanation in the factors typical of each area. Furthermore, when natives come into contact with other cultures, deculturation processes in the dietary pattern often take place.[31] These deculturation processes are not limited to clashes between Indian and white cultures, such as prevail in most of Latin America, but to the adaptation and absorption of dissimilar cultures not of Indian origin, such as in Puerto Rico and the southwestern States of this country, where the Hispanic and the Anglo-Saxon mode of life meet. Procurement of food in industrial areas by low income groups may modify the diet considerably. With this in mind no gene-

[25] Spinden, H. J. The Chorotegan Culture area. XXI° Congrès International des Americanistes (529-545) Goteborg, 1925.

[26] Schultz, A. H. Anthropological Studies on Nicaraguan Indians. Amer. Jour. Physical Anthropology, 1926, *9*, 65-80.

[27] Harrower, D. E. Rama, Mosquito and Sumu, of Nicaragua. Museum of American Indian, Heye Foundation. 1925, *2*, 44-48.

[28] Conzemius, E. (see footnotes Nos. 1 and 23), also: Die Rama Indianer von Nicaragua. Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie, 1921, *59*, 291-362 (Berlin); Apuntes sobre algunos Nombres Geográficos Mosquitos en Costa Rica y Panamá. Revista de Costa Rica, 1922, 300-306; Les îles Corn de Nicaragua. La Geographie, 1929, *52*, 346-362 (Paris).

[29] Pijoán, M. Certain Factors involved in the Struggle Against Malnutrition and disease. Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1943. Inter-Americana Monographs.

[30] Eggan, F., and Pijoán, M. Some Problems in the Study of Food and Nutrition. América Indígena. 1943, 3, 9-23.

[31] Pijoán, M., and Elkin, C. A. Secondary Anemia due to Prolonged and Exclusive Milk Feeding Among Shoshone Indian Infants. Jour. Nutrition, 1944, *27*, 67-75.

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15

362 177 ralization can be directly applied to diets in the tropics: the galaxy of nutritional factors are determined by the local situation and the food habits of the people.

164 The same can be said of tropical infectious disease. The variety of vectors, their ecological relations to circumstances determined by altitude, rains, swamps, climate and vegetation limit disease entities to special regions even though many diseases occur throughout the world. It must be remembered that to the diseases generally present among people are added those which are peculiar to a new environment and that modifications of a disease can take place. For instance, whooping cough is a serious disease attended with a high mortality rate in Central Nicaragua, whereas scarlet fever produces a mild disease often unrecognized. Whether the host or the organism is responsible for such a condition is not known and the problem of host and parasite interrelationships becomes a complex one.

THE MOSQUITO AREA: THE LOCAL SITUATION

101 The vast region on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua and Honduras is known by the name of Mosquito coast. It is inhabited buy four different tribes of Indians: The Miskito, the Suma (Sumu), the Paya, and the Rama. In some localities the Miskito, often incorrectly called [144] Mosquito, have a considerable admixture of Negro blood and, for this reason, are in some places called Zambos. The other three tribes, however, are practically of pure Indian blood. In earlier times, the 101 western region of the Mosquito coast was occupied by the Matagalpa 197 Indians, whose language extended over a large area in Nicaragua and Honduras, but has been extinct for nearly half a century. However, a dialect of its is spoken to this day by the older inhabitants of the Salvadorean villages of Cacaopera and Lislique. Today the Indian languages of the area are somewhat interrelated, especially Matagalpa, Miskito, and Suma; Paya is an unrelated language.

101 The Miskito and small isolated bands of Suma Indians inhabit 361 the eastern side of Honduras and Nicaragua. They are found from the Río Tinto (lat. 15° 50′ N.) to Río Punta Gorda (Lat. 11° 30′ N.). The villages are located chiefly along the banks of the rivers as far up as the headwaters within the jungle proper. The Suma Indians are found primarily in the interior; they are somewhat uncommunicative, but cooperative. The Miskito are self-sustaining and at times derive ad- [464] ditional income from labor with fruit companies, mining enterprises and rubber collecting agencies. Today they play an important part in the wild rubber collection program.

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15

of quarrel between two women. The fact remains that very little wrong-doing exists among the Miskito since once a wrongdoer is found out he loses the respect of his community and usually moves to another locality. It a debtor refuses to pay or refund an object or money borrowed, the creditor informes the village of this fact and he can go to the plantation of the debtor and pay himself in provisions without risk. Such pressure usually causes the debtor to make goods his debt.

In rare cases today poisoning is used to exterminate an enemy. This is accomplished by the use of poisonous extracts from plants, alligator gall, or cyanide stolen from the mines. If, however, an Indian shoots his enemy, he must likewise follow him to death. In certain cases, if an Indian has been insulted and cannot collect payment, he commits suicide, wherepon the offender must do the same. In most instances the threat in itself brings apology and payment. In general there is little crime among the Miskito.

The Indians show great reserve, are relatively silent, honest and generally reliable. Stinginess is considered the worst vice and foreigners who bestow gifts are known as good men. They are not quarrelsome. Recent contacts with foreigners has increased their shrewdness and they are less shy than they were years ago.

Members of the family address each other according to sex and relation, such as mother, father, daughter, brother, etc. Each has a name given for some peculiarity. Thus, an infant receives no name until some characteristic is noted.

The mentioning of a deceased person's name is taboo and is a direct insult to refer to the person in the presence of relatives. Husband and wife call each other *mayi*, my consort; before a child is born to them he calls her *kika*, girl, while she calls him *wahma*, young man. After a child is born they often call each other *luhpi yapti*, my child's mother, and *luhpi aisa*, my child's father. *Mahma* or *masa* are used to address a son or brother, whereas *kika* or *misis* refer to daughter or sister. Old men and women are called *dama*, grandfather, and *kuka*, grandmother. The common form of salutation is *naksa* and occasionally *nahki sma* (how are you?) The other replies *aiñwa sna* (I am well). When they take leave the expression is *aisabi* (we will speak again).

DWELLINGS

The villages *(tawan)* are located chiefly on the banks of waterways, rivers and lagoons. The reason for this may be twofold. First the waterways form the chief source of transportation by boat and secondly agriculture and wild fruits can be developed and secured near

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15

262 The Indians also secure honey from wild honey bees. In the Coco
[222] territory there are various species of stingless bees *(Meliponidae)*. The honey cells are circular and the honey is yellow and slightly acid in taste, it does not crystallize when kept for sometime. Previous to the introduction of sugar cane the honey was used to sweeten food.

The most important food of the Miskito Indian is the banana, even though it is not indigenous to America. As such this is one of the few examples where a food originally foreign to a people was immediately accepted an chronically utilized. On the other hand the use of cereals so common throughout the Americas, is infrequent. The reason for this is that cereals are difficult to grow in this territory. The numerous insects which attack certain types of vegetable or plant life restricts agricultural enterprise. Furthermore there appears to be no need of cereals in the diet. Beans have recently been introduced and in some communities they have been raised for eating purposes.

Oils are easily prepared from coconuts or varieties of nuts. These are crushed and placed in boiling water, and in due course the oil rises to the surface and is skimmed off.

262
177 It can be said that the Miskito Indians living as they are, unmolested, by the banks of rivers and streams secure enough wild fruits, vegetables, fish and game to adequately supply the yearly food. To this is added small agricultural projects of their own, such as banana plantations, citrus fruits, etc. When these Indians become sequestered in larger villages or are removed from their community to work for mines, rubber collection, or as laborers for fruit companies, the dietary deteriorates. To secure food under these new circumstances they need money, a substance which is easily expendable and does not represent a material which may be needed in the future. The Rubber Development Corporation has had in many instances fed laborers on foreign foods which have not always agreed with or been agreeable to workers.

NUTRITIONAL EVALUATION OF THE DIET

121 The evaluation of the nutritional status of individuals from any single examination of their diet is difficult if not impossible. There are widely divergent wiews regarding the needs of the body, as to the extent and character of the food requirements, of the relative merits of various foods and as to the degree and frequency of intake of the nutritional components. A survey of dietary intakes will often make one suspect a deficiency and may warn the investigator what to seek for In the end clinical appraisal is the only satisfactory method. There is